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Simpson, Ashley

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'Democracy' in education: an omnipresent yet distanced 'other'

Ashley Simpson[1] & Fred Dervin[1]

ABSTRACT Like many concepts and notions used in various subfields of education, the idea of democracy is both floating and polysemic. It can also be a conveniently loose term that can be used by some to position themselves above others and to 'teach them' lessons about how to 'do' democracy, often creating unjustified hierarchies and moralistic judgements. Based on Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of 'authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse', this article examines how the contested idea of democracy is constructed and negotiated at a key International Conference on democratic education. Excerpts from talks given at the conference serve as case studies in this paper, without the intention to generalise about discourses of democracy in education. The results hint at uncritical attempts, often based on pathos, to totalise and generalise 'democracy/the democratic' especially within discourses on 'democratic schools'. Such discourses can contribute to cultural othering and stereotyping, as well as, simplistic assumptions about how 'democracy' functions and comes-into-being. They can also help the utterer hide their sentiments. Thus, the aim of this paper is to deconstruct an essentialised and somewhat empty vision of democracy discourse in education. The fact that the idea of 'freedom' is often used as a synonym for 'democracy' during the conference is also discussed.

[1] University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland. Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to A.S. (email: ashley.simpson@helsinki.fi)

Introduction[1]: democracy and heteroglossia

'Democracy' and 'education' are always seemingly joined by the connective 'and'—to refer to John Dewey's (1916) publication 'Democracy and Education'. Scholars, policy-makers, politicians and educators often assume the word 'democracy' follows 'education', and/or vice versa. However, consideration needs to be played to the wider social, political and linguistic interrelationships of how 'democracy' and 'education' are understood and how 'democracy-comes-into-being' in the specific context of education (Joas, 2000; Howlett, 2013).

Apple (2014), like many other commentators (e.g., Ball, 2007, 2009), drawing on the neoliberalisation of education systems, notes how increased privatisation, competition, marketization, combined with 'standards-driven' procedures and measures have become ingrained within educational policies throughout the world. Apple (2011, 2014) observes how schools, pupils, educational policies, and, knowledge have become 'commodified'. He also argues that the forces of neoliberalism manifest through processes of disarticulation and misarticulation whereby hierarchised and hegemonic metadiscourses function ideologically in distorting meanings and representations (ibid). In this sense, words such as 'democracy' and 'justice' are constantly refracted by discursive, social, and ideological forces which shift how 'democracy' and 'justice' are continually represented and understood (ibid).

The forces of neoliberalism in education have resulted in perceptions of educational choice such as in 'free schools', 'academies', and other forms of decentralised schooling that have distorted perceptions of 'public' (state) and 'private' education (West, 2014; Hicks, 2015). At the same time, for instance, 'democracy' and 'citizenship' have become part of national curricula, teaching syllabi, teacher training resources and programmes, as well as, policy documents—seemingly, we are all 'democratic citizens' (Biesta, 2011). Simultaneously, the so-called 'alternative education movement' has positioned itself as an alternative to the neoliberalisation of education through, for instance, 'democratic schools' (Dundar, 2013; Korkmaz and Erden, 2014).

'Democratic education' and/or 'democracy in education' may encompass a number of 'buzzwords' and metadiscourses such as 'multicultural education' (Peters-Davis and Shultz, 2015), 'intercultural education' (Clark and Dervin, 2014) and 'citizenship education' (Biesta, 2015). As a result, some of the 'meanings' associated to, and generated within, 'democratic education' and 'democratic schools' can be somewhat ambiguous and contradictory (Woodin, 2014). As such, the multiple, varied and differing translations of 'democratic values' (such as equality and human rights) mean one must pay attention to the symbolic, representative and discursive functions of 'democracy' (Laclau, 2005).

Mikhail Bakhtin's (1975, 1981) concept of heteroglossia can be useful to examine these functions. Heteroglossia refers to the fact that one's own utterances always contain 'another's speech in another's language (Bakhtin, 1981, p 324)—the other[s]-in-the-self are articulated through the discourses we utter. Heteroglossia can thus be understood as the constant refraction and metamorphoses of utterances within one's speech (Bakhtin, 1981). Thus, one's speech can never entirely be 'one's own' (ibid). In this sense, heteroglossia can mark the negotiation of the self and other [s] through the refracted interplay and performativity of multiple and varied discourses (Schiffrin et al., 2010). It is through the constant interaction between and within discourses which can engender meanings that can condition others (Bakhtin, 1981). Bakhtin adds that 'all utterances are heteroglot' in that they function symbolically through indexing representations within discourse (Bakhtin, 1981, p 428).

The interplay and performativity between sign-signifier-signified offers a way of understanding the representative and symbolic functions of discourses in engendering social meanings and identities (Hall, 1993). As Barthes explains, 'the signified is the concept, the signifier is the acoustic image (which is mental) and the relation between the concept and the image is the sign (the word, for instance), which is a concreate entity' (Barthes, 1972, p 112). In this sense, the meanings of words ('democracy' in this paper) are not fixed in one singular or 'objective' way (Hall and Du Gay, 1996). It is important to note the influence discourse has on the constant instability and displacement of discursive concepts such as 'democracy', notwithstanding, the inherent antagonisms found within 'democratic values' (Mouffe, 2000, 2009).

Two aspects of Bakhtin's 'The speaking person in the novel' (1981), on which we focus in this article, is authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse. Authoritative discourse, as described in the (1981) English translation is described as discourses whose meanings have been fixed and allow no space for neither contestation nor interrogation (e.g., the authority of religious dogma) (Bakhtin, 1981). Authoritative discourse can function as a taboo as it 'commands our unconditional allegiance' (Bakhtin, 1981, p 343). Taken from the glossary of the English version of the book, internally persuasive discourse is described as discourse, which is accentuated and reaccentuated by 'one's own' gestures and accents within discourse (Bakhtin, 1981), though, Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia reminds us that both authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse are contained within the discourses of the self and others (ibid).

Many quotations/citations have focused on the 'opposition' of authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse (Skidmore, 2016). As Wardekker (2013) shows [an]other's discourse is present in both authoritative and internally persuasive discourse—just because a discourse may be authoritative does not mean authoritative discourses are untouched by the forces of heteroglossia. We argue that Bakhtin himself would not agree with the idea that authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses are uttered and/or written in the form of a binary opposition. Discourses can be simultaneously authoritative and internally persuasive.

Basing our discussion of what we consider to be simultaneous aspects in Bakhtin's work, authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse, we use excerpts and images taken from the International Democratic Education Conference (IDEC 2016). The annual conference (year of creation: 1993) brought together a number of different people, from academics and teachers, to activists and 'gurus' of the so-called 'democratic education movement'. The discourses shared at the conference under review offer a rare insight into discourses frequently uttered in education about democracy in education and offer a lens to look into how utterances on 'democratic schools' and 'democratic education' manifest into deeper logics and meanings.

Heteroglossia as authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse

In education, so-called 'dialogic pedagogy' has resulted in numerous citations and references of Mikhail Bakhtin's work within education, from literacy education (Lee and Moon, 2013), teacher education (Moate and Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2014) and as a pedagogy for educational logics, practices, and, approaches (Skidmore and Murakami, 2016), amongst others. Authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse have been

specifically cited amongst educators across the topics of 'social justice' pedagogies (Gomez, 2014), curriculum discourses and student identities (Ilieva and Waterstone, 2013), classroom interactions and the construction of student identities (Janzen, 2015), and, how teachers' understand the intersectionalities of their students (Gomez et al., 2014). Here it is important to note, as Matusov (2007) argues, that a number of educational scholars have misused 'Bakhtinian concepts' such as internally persuasive discourse.

Contained within the overarching social function of language (heteroglossia) are the concepts of authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse (Bakhtin, 1975, 1981, 2012). Authoritative discourse can relate to discursive traditions, customs, and, ignorance (Matusov, 2007). 'Opposed to it [authoritative discourse] is internally persuasive discourse, which is more akin to retelling a text in one's own words, with one's own accents, gestures, modifications' (Bakhtin, 1981, p 424). Here we take issue with the word 'opposed' in the English edition of 'The Dialogic Imagination' found within 'The speaking person in the novel', 'internally persuasive discourse—as opposed to one which is externally authoritative—is, as it is affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with "one's own word" (Bakhtin, 1981, p 345). However, in the (1975) version of 'The dialogic imagination' in Russian Voprosy Literatury i Estetiki (опросы литературы и эстетики), in English 'Questions of Literature and Aesthetics' (Bakhtin, 1975), Bakhtin does not use the word 'oppose' when defining and articulating authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse in Russian. In the Russian edition Bakhtin states, 'в отличие от внешне авторитарного слова слово внутренне убедительное в процессе его утверждающего усвоения тесно сплетается со «со своим словом»[2]' (Bakhtin, 1975, p 158), the translation from Russian to English is similar but not the same, the Russian words 'В отличие' (V otlichie) translated into English can mean 'unlike', 'difference', 'distinction', 'differentness' and/or 'otherness', but not strictly speaking, 'opposed'. Internally persuasive discourse contains one's other[s] in one's speech, meaning that internally persuasive discourse simultaneously struggles with existing stereotypes and dogmatic viewpoints, whilst at the same time, it provides the possibility for discursive [re]accentuation and the diversifying of discursive meanings (Britzman, 2012). In the Russian edition Bakhtin stresses that the boundaries between authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse are fluidly antagonistic (Bakhtin, 2012)—in the sense that authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses are constantly shifting and metamorphosing one another. Here it is important to note that authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses are located within dialogism—the encompassing mode of heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1975, 2012) meaning that authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourses are never 'one's own' and are always refracted by speakers within dialogues. Due to the forces of (social) heteroglossia authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse cannot be 'opposed' to one another, as ultimately these discourses interrelate through interactions with each [other] generating meanings in the process (Bakhtin, 1975, 1981, 2012). Stuart Hall reminds us in 'What is this 'black' in popular culture?' that the interplay and performativity of discourses cannot be understood simply as 'an upturning of two things which remain locked within their oppositional frameworks', rather, discourses are continuously 'cross-cut by what Bakhtin calls the dialogic' (Hall, 1993, p 114). In this sense, through dialogues internally persuasive discourse marks the embodiment of diverse voices colliding with each other (Matusov, 2007). Discourses are thus constantly accentuated and reaccentuated through dialogical interactions within and between the self and others.

Heteroglossia enables us to trace the diversity of the utterances speakers utter and their given contexts (Bakhtin, 1975, 1981, 1984). For example, one can trace the use of heteroglossic discourse markers (Aijmer, 2013) which can focus on the use of pronouns (e.g., I, you), demonstratives (e.g., this, that), spatial and temporal adverbs (e.g., here and now), and, tense markers (e.g., going, went) (Hughes and Tracy, 2015). Through heteroglossia one can focus on the constantly coexisting and competing discourses which are indexed by language in certain communicative situations (Androutsopoulos, 2007). Heteroglossia can allow one to understand the indexical function of utterances which may reveal clues as to 'deeper' meanings and ideologies as well as indicating the 'social position' of a speaker, such as social class and profession etc. (Blackledge and Creese, 2014 in Preece, 2016). Indeed, heteroglossic analyses can be used to show the ways identities are constructed and negotiated through discourse (Preece, 2016).

Counter to a number of scholars on Bakhtin's work who have stated that authoritative discourse is 'opposed' to internally persuasive discourse (such as Skidmore, 2016), we claim that particular discourses can be authoritative and simultaneously internally persuasive. We argue, (a), 'democracy' is being discursively assimilated and mistaken as 'freedom'—whereby utterances on 'democracy' have become assimilated to 'freedom', (b), 'democracy' is being discursively used as *pathos* to evoke totalised [mis]understandings about 'democracy'—in these situations we show discourses simultaneously functioning as authoritative and internally persuasive discourse.

In order to show the simultaneity of authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse we have selected 4 excerpts and 5 images to illustrate and problematise how 'democratic education'/'democratic schools' are constructed within this community of academics and practitioners—without claiming to generalise to other communities/contexts. We claim that through the call for papers for the conference, invitation to keynote speakers who share similar ideologies of past conferences since 1993, the keynotes contribute to essentialise a certain way of describing and discussing democracy in education. The excerpts show utterances on 'democratic schools' by international 'others' talking to 'others' and all of the speakers are talking to a diverse international audience. All of the excerpts and images taken from IDEC 2016 (excerpts 1, 3, 4, 5) are accessible in the public domain as all of the content used is from online videos. In this paper we focus on three main aspects for our analysis, relating them to Bakhtin's work: the ways discourses on democracy are used to hide speaker sentiments, the ways democracy and words such as freedom are being used as interchangeable and convenient synonyms, and, the ways democracy functions as pathos.

Discourses of democracy as a way of hiding sentiments

Our interpretation of Bakhtin's concepts of authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse, is that discourse can simultaneously be authoritative and internally persuasive (Bakhtin, 1975, 1981). In this sense, a discourse can be totalising and exert power over us (through reproducing customs, traditions, ignorance etc.), yet, be constituted by intersubjective manifestations and differences (such as differing intersectionalities of multiple identity markers) whose content is open to discursive argumentations and contestations (Bakhtin, 1975, 1981). In a sense, discourses on 'democracy/the democratic' can hold a metadiscursive ideological grip over us whilst enabling to reconstruct differing possibilities. In this sense, 'democracy' contains inherent discursive antagonisms and contradictions whereby the sign of 'democracy' is susceptible to influences from the social heteroglot (Bakhtin, 1975, 1981) (including; discourses/

power/ideologies) resulting in a constant metamorphoses of the sign whilst maintaining a symbolic signified (Barthes, 1972). As we shall see in the excerpt below, the multivoicedness of the speakers' utterances, and of 'democracy', is illuminated to show potentially hidden sentiments which lie behind his/her utterances.

Excerpt 1 is taken from one of the keynote speeches at IDEC 2016. The speaker, reminiscing his time as a student, attended a 'democratic school' and has worked professionally in and with 'democratic schools' in the United Kingdom. In the excerpt he reflects with the audience on a basic issue: the potential embedment of democratic cultures in schools.

Excerpt 1. IDEC 2016 Keynote speech (i) 'Shifting the future of education: can you embed democratic cultures in any school'?

For the purposes of this paper we only show the opening stages of the speakers' presentation. The presentation lasted for 19 min and it was not necessary to transcribe all of the contents for our study.

1. So, can you embed democratic cultures in any school? That is the question. Can I just see a show of hands.
2. That's the question. Who says 'yes'?
   [looks at the audience]
3. Okay.
4. Can you embed democratic practices in any school?
   [participants who agree with the statement raise their hands]
5. Yes. Do you think you can?
6. And who thinks no you can't?
   [participants who agree with the statement raise their hands]
7. Interesting, so most people think maybe you can. I'm going to talk about that today. But I started thinking
8. when I sat down for the keynotes yesterday, okay, so if we are thinking about whether we can embed democratic
9. cultures in state schools and in in any school, can you do a keynote speech at an IDEC conference without a set of
10. powerpoint slides and without just talking the whole time. Because if you can't do that you definitely cannot
11. Embed democratic cultures in any school. So I'm going to try it. And this is the test.
    [Audience applaud]
12. We'll see if it works [laughs] and partly it's going to rely on you guys. So first, I just want to start thinking about
13. this. What, who …who in this room thinks that every child should have an access to education please stand
14. up now. Should every child have access to education?
    [The audience participants stand up]
15. Okay. And if you think, and if you think that, that access to that education should be free can you give me that
16. you know, that international money symbol
    [Keynote speaker makes a gesture with their hands that is copied by the conference audience]
    [Keynote speaker laughs]
17. And if you think whilst they are having this free education they should have their rights respected in accordance
18. with the UN convention
    [Keynote speaker makes a gesture with both hands in the air which is copied by the conference audience]
19. Yeah. I mean that's what I thought. [laughs] and, and from my take on this if you, if you think that then we
20. have to realistically look at embedding democratic cultures in every school. Because a democratic culture in my
21. mind is the only way that students can have their rights fully respected within education and I think every child
22. has a right to that and every child is not in one of the democratic schools that many people in this room are
23. privileged to be part of.

As asserted earlier, the conference participants appear to be part of one community that shares similar ideas about democracy in education. What the speaker does here is to verify that this is the case. In other words, by asking the entire audience to share what they think, the speaker wants to ensure common understanding—and thus, implicitly, belonging to this same community of discourse on democracy in education. Let us examine the way the speaker leads her/his audience to 'agree' with her/him.

The Excerpt starts with a question from the keynote speaker, 'can you embed democratic cultures in any school?' (line 1), the speaker then performs a speech repair when repeating the question by uttering on line 4, 'can you embed democratic practices into any school'? In conversations speech repairs can show hidden sentiments/meanings behind utterances (Hayashi et al., 2013), whereby repairs themselves can be utilised as a defensive discourse strategy to 'repair' the images of the self through reworking previous utterances in conversations (Benoit, in Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015). Here defensive discourse strategies such as speech repairs can mark facework (Lee, 2013). When the face is threatened, indicated in the excerpt by the audience's reaction to the keynote speaker's question on line 1 and by the Speaker's rewording of the question on line 4, the speaker is trying to make the face consistent with their utterances (Haugh and Chang, 2015). In this instance, the keynote speaker avoids confrontation with the audience by not repeating the word 'culture', instead, the speaker decides to use the word 'practice'. Here 'democracy/the democratic' functions as authoritative discourse as 'culture' has seemingly become an uncomfortable taboo or an embarrassingly empty signifier for the speaker to discuss.

'Democratic cultures' re-enter the dialogue on line 11, here the speaker distances themselves from 'democratic cultures' through speech act exteriorisation whilst at the same time uttering 'democratic cultures'. The speaker utters 'Because if you cannot do that you definitely cannot embed democratic cultures in any school' (lines 10 and 11), combined with laughter (line 12) and the utterances 'and partly it's going to rely on you guys' (line 12) show how the speaker exteriorises 'democratic cultures' by deflecting the responsibility onto the audience. Simultaneously, the internal struggles of internally persuasive discourse are characterised by the speaker's incoherence—the struggle of the others-within-the-self (Bakhtin, 1981). The symbolism of the speaker's requirement for the audience to agree with their statements (see also excerpt 3 below) can show the omnipresence of 'democracy/the democratic' as authoritative discourse, yet, it can also show the struggles of how 'democracy/the democratic' come-into-being. The Other is simultaneously omnipresent in conjunction with, and, alongside 'democracy/the democratic'. The iconography of 'the international money symbol' (line 16), the 'UN convention' (line 18) and rights of the child (line 19 to line 23) shows how these concepts/ideas/logics are 'assumed', emphasising the antagonistic and often contradictory manifestations of 'democratic values' (Rancière, 2007). Though, when faced by international others (an international conference audience), in the setting/context of [an]other, here the struggle of internally persuasive discourse (Bakhtin, 1975, 1981) shown by discourses on 'democracy/the democratic' is an internal struggle between, and within, the others-within-the-self. This seems to show potentially hidden sentiments which lie behind her/his utterances.

'Democracy' as a convenient substitute for other contested words

This article puts the idea of dialogism at its centre. As asserted earlier, discourses of democracy are embedded in other discourses of democracy, well beyond a given context of utterance. Excerpt 2 is another keynote speech taken from IDEC 2016. While the first

excerpt asked the basic question of the place of democracy in schools, this keynote speech looks into what the presenter refers to as Democratic Education 2.0. The keynote speaker is regarded as a 'democratic education guru' who runs their own 'democratic school' and has written and spoken on 'democratic education' around the world. In this excerpt the keynote speaker reflects on the similarities between democratic schools around the world.

Excerpt 2. IDEC 2016 Keynote Speech (ii) 'Democratic Education 2.0—Changing the paradigm from a pyramid to a network'.

This keynote speech was 48 min long and it was not necessary for us to transcribe all of the speech. Instead we show the speech through two excerpts.

1. But if we look globally about all of the thousand schools [so-
2. called 'democratic schools'] all over the world and
3. we can see what is …. because a lot of people say democratic
4. education it's different. It's different in Japan it's
5. different in Korea it's different in Europe. But I think we
6. can say three four things that is in most of the schools.
7. And the most, what we will see is, first of all we see a
8. democratic community in every school, the school run by a
9. democratic community, it's different from school to school,
10. but we have parliament meetings, we have
11. different meetings, we have different way of voting or
12. consensus, we have a democratic process that runs the
13. school and all the schools. Another thing we can see in all
14. the schools is pluralistic learning, what it mean, it
15. means that in all our schools the student[s] choose what to
16. learn, how to learn, with whom to learn, and all these
17. things… we can find in most democratic schools. another
18. thing we can see ……is dialogic ….
19. relationship, in all our schools we have a very close
20. relationship between everyone to everyone. This is our goal.
21. We do not want a close relationship between teachers and
22. students, we want between student to student, between
23. teacher to student we believe the connection and close
24. relationship is very very important. And the fourth thing,
25. that does not exist in all of the democratic schools but in a
26. lot of democratic schools, I call it democratic content,
27. what it means, when you look about the curriculum is a lot
28. of time you adopt the national curriculum and the
29. national curriculum is very nationality and what, where,
30. what we can see in democratic schools is the curriculum
31. comes from the point of view of human rights, of the right
32. of the minority, the rights of the weak people, that's
33. very very important when you study history and other
34. things.

Excerpt 2 starts with the keynote speaker uttering contradictory utterances. He acknowledges the 'diversity' of 'democratic schools' by stating 'it's different in Japan, it's different in Korea, it's different in Europe' (line 2 and line 3). The speaker then goes on to utter a number of generalisations and assumptions about 'democratic schools', such as, 'what we will see is, first of all, we will see a democratic community in every school' (line 4), 'the school run by a democratic community' (line 4 and line 5), 'another thing we can see in all the schools is pluralistic learning (line 7), and, 'in all our schools the student[s] choose, what to learn, how to learn, with whom to learn' (line 8). The speaker utters these generalisations without problematising and explaining these concepts, such as, how is a 'democratic community' understood in 'democratic schools'? How does the so-called 'democratic community' come-into-being? What is meant by 'pluralistic learning'? None of these questions are problematised. Here, it is important to note, that throughout the excerpt the speaker is constantly reformulating previous utterances. For example, the speaker explains that 'in all our schools the student [s] choose what they learn' (line 8), later in the extract the speaker utters 'when you look at the curriculum… you adopt the national curriculum' (line 14), so how can students in democratic schools choose what to learn when (as the speaker utters) in most instances teachers are adopting a national curriculum? It can be fair to say, there is a considerable amount of ambiguity about how 'democracy' is uttered by the speaker.

It is also important to note the ways the speaker fixes, what the speaker calls, 'democratic content' (line 13). The speaker utters 'democratic content', then juxtaposes the national curriculum and 'democratic schools' by uttering 'what we can see in democratic schools is curriculum comes from the point of view of human rights' (line 15 and line 16). This utterance is preceded by the repair 'what, where, what' (line 15), and is followed by discourses which could potentially marginalise and 'other' (Dervin, 2016; Jackson, 2012; Holliday, 2011) peoples and/or groups. By 'othering' we mean discursive constructs which have been closely linked to the [re]production of power/knowledge in society especially in their ability to marginalise, stereotype and discriminate against peoples and/or groups through essentialised representations (Dervin, 2016). The speaker utters human rights in 'democratic schools' comes from 'the rights of the weak people, that's very very important when you study history and other things' (line 16 and line 17). As McDonald (2016) shows, classroom practices and subject textbooks (such as History) can essentialise identities through the reproduction of white victimhood, thus, further marginalising and/or discriminating against one's other[s]. Here the speaker's labelling of the 'weak' (line 16) engenders discursive boundaries between 'the strong' and 'the weak'. Such a dichotomy, reveals the coherently incoherence of discourses on 'democratic schools', yet these incoherencies are bound together by 'democracy' as an authoritative discourse—in the sense that 'democracy' is simultaneously assumed and generalised (as being present).

Following the presentation, the speaker invited audience participants to engage in a questions and answers session. Excerpt 3 is a short dialogue between a member of the audience and the keynote presenter about democratic schools '3.0, 4.0, 5.0'.

Excerpt 3. Questions and answers following IDEC 2016 Keynote Speech (ii) 'Democratic Education 2.0—Changing the paradigm from a pyramid to a network'.

1. Speaker A—I got a question, when I saw the pictures about
2. democratic schools they reminded me of my own
3. school about 50 years ago… what about schools without
4. classrooms, without principals, without teachers
5. without curricula, without blackboards, like, democratic
6. schools like 3.0, 4.0, 5.0.
7. Keynote speaker—…. I think from my point of view, my
8. point of view, every school without is not interesting
9. me, every school without is not interesting me, not,
10. continue what you want, I am very interested in
11. ….ah…because I don't need a school that is negative to
12. someone, something. I want to see what you are doing, I
13. like the idea without [the] principal, I like the idea, but it's
14. not an idea, it's half of the idea, what happened, how
15. to run the school and you need to bring the idea how to run
16. the school without something that's very very
17. interesting and for example, I can give you an example,
18. when we say… education city we don't say a
19. school without walls, I can say it, a school without walls, or
20. without limited space, but we say it differently, we
21. say all the city is one big school and then people can ask me,
22. ok, if all the city is one big school why don't you
23. say all the world is one big school, and I have answered to
24. this because I think that education in the future

13. need[s] to be 'blend learning', it needs to be face-by-face, and meeting, and using…web meetings. But this,
14. this is interesting me, yeah I want to see how we run the… schools that give much freedom to peoples.

Speaker A's question in excerpt 3 (line 1 to line 3) combined with the response of the keynote speaker (line 4 to line 16) in addition to the utterances in excerpt 2, marks authoritative discourse—in part this is marked by the keynote speaker not uttering the word 'democracy' or 'democratic' in their response. Bakhtin's concept of assimilation, whereby the speech of others can be detected in one's own speech, whilst still remaining other (Bakhtin, 1975, 1981), shows how 'democracy', or to be more specific, the 'democratic' in 'democratic schools' is continuously reaccentuated and displaced by, and within, discourse. Here, drawing on excerpts 3 and 4, the ways the keynote speaker and speaker A utter 'democracy'/ '[the] democratic' is uttered in a totalising and generalised manner fundamentally based upon assumptions around the presence and meaning of 'democracy'. We argue, an example of the reaccentuation processes of authoritative discourse is the assimilation from 'democracy/democratic' to 'freedom' in the sense that the speaker is uttering 'democracy/democratic' but is actually describing notions of 'freedom'. In excerpt 4 this is illustrated by the question from speaker A in excerpt 3 (line 1 to line 3), and the keynote speaker's utterances on line 7 and line 14 whereby both speakers describe 'freedom' whilst uttering discourses about 'democratic schools'. These excerpts show the totalising and generalising ways 'democracy/the democratic' is uttered but, also, the totalising logics which support utterances on 'democracy/the democratic'—in this sense, these excerpts can show how 'democracy/the democratic' is a distanced other which can be uttered frequently without critique, in an omnipotent and omnipresent way. As Bakhtin (1975, 1981) notes, when discourse functions in an omnipresent way it imparts to everything 'its own specific tones and from time to time breaking through to become a completely materialised thing, as another's word fully set off and demarcated (Bakhtin, 1981, p 347)', it is this omnipresent function of 'democracy/the democratic' which means that, in this context, discourses on 'democracy/the democratic' can simultaneously function as authoritative and internally persuasive discourse.

'Democracy' as pathos

In order to show the constant metamorphosing of 'democracy/the democratic' as authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse at the conference under review we show how 'democracy/the democratic' are used as discursive strategiesn in what follows.

By 'pathos' we mean discourses which invoke an emotional response through text and/or speech which are used as persuasion techniques for the purposes of argumentation (Marinelli, 2015). Here it is important to note that pathos can function as a metadiscourse in the ways it can shape public opinions and attitudes within a given context (Ho, 2016). Excerpt 4 is taken from the keynote speech entitled 'The importance of democratic higher education and social systems in making democratic futures'. The speaker is a Japanese academic and the speech predominantly focuses on the Japanese context of education using the Japanese concept of 'Hikikomori (social withdrawal)' to justify the necessity of 'democratic higher education' in Japan and throughout the world. This excerpt offers an insight into the discourse strategies and discourse styles behind utterances on 'democracy' and 'democratic schools'.

Excerpt 4. IDEC 2016 Keynote Speech (iii) 'The importance of democratic higher education and social systems in making democratic futures'.

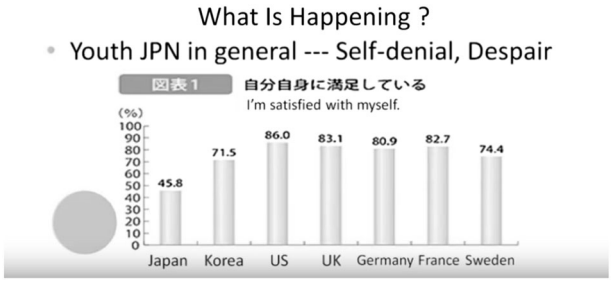

Fig. 1 Taken from IDEC keynote presentation 'The importance of democratic higher education and social systems in making democratic futures'

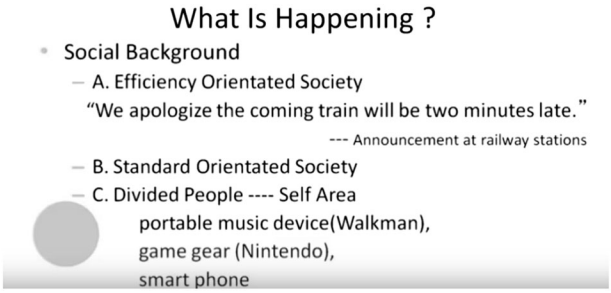

Fig. 2 Taken from IDEC keynote presentation 'The importance of democratic higher education and social systems in making democratic futures'

This keynote speech was 30 min long and it was not necessary for us to transcribe all of the speech. Instead we show the speech in a number of fragments.

1. Ah, so, why do they have such a fear for the other people? It explains a little bit, so this is another [form of]
2. statistics [the speaker shows Fig. 1 on the presentation]. So international statistics, it says… less than half
3. of Japanese youth are satisfied with the person. So comparing with the other statistics, Swedish, French,
4. American, German, British, Korean… majority of young people are satisfied with themselves, but less than
5. half of Japanese are like that.
[the speaker then moves to Fig. 2 on the presentation]
6. So I need to explain a little bit about Japanese social background……quite often in Tokyo we have a
7. very funny phrase at the railway station, so they say, 'we apologise the coming train will be 2 min late',
8. 1 min late or something like that. So it maybe very strange for you. But in Japanese society they have to
9. apologise, a minute late or something like that, because it must be on time and it means efficiency is so important
10. in Japan, and, … it connected with the … next element, so standard is also very important, so very
11. efficiently things to do, we must to things in a very certain way… [the speaker coughs]…excuse me… and then,
12. another phenomena is going on, so now a days not only young people but also older …elder people, not
13. so old people, quite a few Japanese people … have a music device or a smartphone and so on so if you come
14. to Japan and you ride on the train maybe you will see many many Japanese people using digital devices and they

15. concentrate, in, on their world. So some scholar says studies self area they concentrate on their world. They do
16. not pay attention to outside of their persons world.

[the presentation continues]

Excerpt 4 starts with a number of generalised and essentialised utterances about peoples and 'cultures'. By essentialism we mean discourses that present people's behaviour as defined and constrained so stereotypes become the essence of who they are (Holliday, 2011; Dervin and Machart, 2015). The speaker argues that Japanese students are 'less satisfied' with their self than 'Swedish, French, American, German, British, Korean' (line 3 and 4) as juxtaposed to Japanese students (Fig. 1) and Japanese society (Fig. 2). At no time does the speaker problematise what it means to be 'satisfied with myself', or indeed, what is/are one's self/selves. The self and satisfaction are assumed without critique. The speaker then goes on to utter a number of social and cultural stereotypes about Japanese society, such as, 'the coming train will be 2 min late' (line 7), that 'efficiency is important' (line 9), that Japanese people 'have to apologise' (line 8 and line 9), that many Japanese people use digital devices (line 13 and line 14), and, finally the speaker engenders imagery and symbolism of Japanese people being like robots 'they concentrate on their world. They do not pay attention to outside of their persons world' (line 15 and line 16). Here the context of the speaker's presentation is built upon cultural essentialism and the use of exteriorising speech acts to engender boundaries, categories, and, labels between differing peoples. The speaker, as an other, 'others' Japanese 'culture'/society though reproducing stereotypes on Japan.

[the speaker shows Fig. 3 on the presentation]

17. from that [Hikikomori] I want to share the story of one girl, Fumi is the name of the girl. So, … she
18. came to _____ she had bullying, she was okay about bullying, but she didn't like the way of the school, so
19. everything is decided by the school and they have to compete with each other for academic marks, competition,
20. ____ is 12 years old, she wrote an essay, so she doesn't like this part and that part and she cannot understand this
21. way of doing things at school, she wrote an essay and she handed it to the principal. After she handed the essay
22. to the principal she decided to leave the school. But in Japan of course we 'have a compulsory education' [the
23. speaker actions quotation marks] so she left the school but there is no place for her to go. …by the society.

[the presentation continues]
[the speaker shows Fig. 4 on the presentation]

24. So, … it is a very sad story about Fumi until that point. … but, Fumi's story is not exceptional, we have

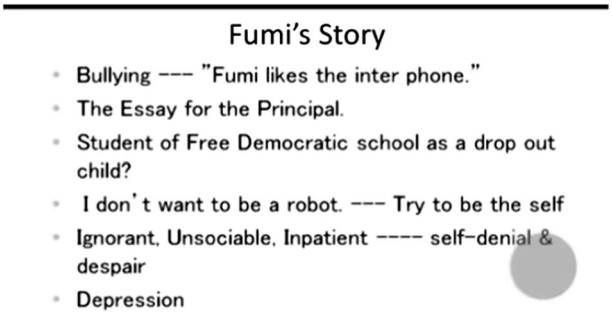

Fig. 3 Taken from IDEC keynote presentation 'The importance of democratic higher education and social systems in making democratic futures'

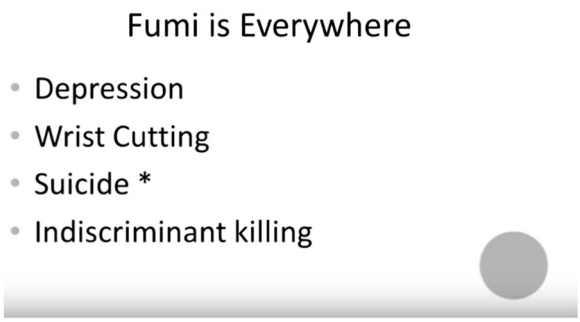

Fig. 4 Taken from IDEC keynote presentation 'The importance of democratic higher education and social systems in making democratic futures'

25. many Fumi in Japanese society. And actually, not only school refusing people but also many Japanese people
26. have a similar kind of experience so, … more and more young people are having a depression experience.
27. … young people experience wrist cutting, especially girls, and the biggest number of the death of young
28. people in their twenties is suicide, and … we had a, some indiscriminate killing, sometime they say they
29. cannot commit suicide, so they … did such a killing, so that … we had a very difficult situation.

[the presentation continues]

Combined with the essentialised utterances of the speaker which we can see from the speakers' utterances and from Fig. 1 and Fig. 2, in the next section of the speech the speaker tells the story of a student in Japan to generate an emotional response between the speaker and the audience. By using Fig. 3 and Fig. 4, in conjunction with the speakers' utterances, the speaker uses the strategy of pathos to justify the importance and need of 'democratic schools/democratic education'. Pathos, here can be understood as a discursive legitimation strategy whereby the speaker is legitimising their argument through an emotional narrative (Vaara, 2014). It is important to stress, as the authors of this paper we may agree with the speaker that overt competition in education may have a number of consequences, however, we would warn against overtly simplistic generalisations and assumptions about student bullying and student mental health especially when being used as a persuasion technique. The speaker assumes that 'Fumi' 'was okay about bullying' (line 18), although this may or may not be true, the speaker does not explain this any further. The speaker then continues the narrative of how Fumi was upset about the way the school was run, as a result Fumi gave an essay to the school principal and later left the school (line 18 to line 22). The speaker then engenders further boundaries through their speech act exteriorisation of Fumi's story by making a moralistic judgement about the whole of Japanese society, the speaker utters 'so she left the school but there is no place for her to go …. by the society' (line 23). Here the afterthought 'by the society' indicates a repair mechanism in unplanned speech to reinforce the speakers' argument through strategies of persuasion (Marinelli, 2015).

The speaker then shifts to Fig. 4 on the presentation. The speaker continues to make generalisations about Japanese society 'we have many Fumi in Japanese society' (line 24 and line 25), 'young people experience wrist cutting' (line 27) and this is continued throughout this section of the speakers' presentation (line 24 to line 29). These utterances provide the pathos for the speaker to propose a so-called 'counter-narrative' to the 'descriptions' the speaker makes about Japanese education and

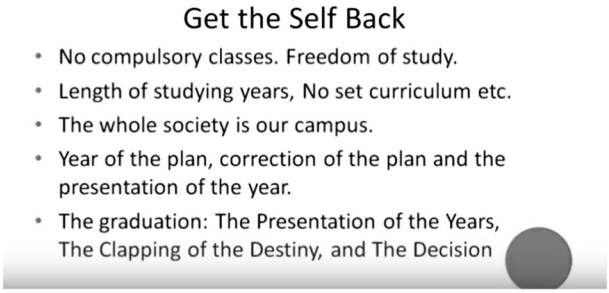

Fig. 5 Taken from IDEC keynote presentation 'The importance of democratic higher education and social systems in making democratic futures'

Japanese society, Fig. 5 shows how 'democracy/the democratic' is utilised discursively to shape the audience's perceptions about Japanese culture/Japanese society and mental health issues in Japan—as these components are juxtaposed to the omnipotent and omnipresent 'democracy' in the room.

'Democracy/the democratic' as pathos here functions as authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1975, 1981)—democracy is a distant yet present force hanging over the utterances of the speaker as it is juxtaposed (in a binary manner) to the Japanese context 'described'—it becomes essentialised and stereotyped when generalisations and assumptions are uttered, yet, no one speaks out and critiques it. It becomes a taboo. In this sense, democracy is an example of authoritative discourse. Nietzsche reminds us though,

> 'No one would consider a doctrine to be true just because it makes people happy or virtuous, with the possible exception of the darling 'Idealists,' who was enthusiastic over the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, and let all sorts of colourful, clumsy, and good-natured desiderata swim through their pond in utter confusion. Happiness and virtue are not arguments. But we like to forget (even thoughtful spirits like to forget) that being made unhappy and evil are not counter-arguments either' (Nietzsche, 2002, p 37).

Therefore, the very presence of 'democracy/the democratic' through its assimilation to 'freedom'—characterised in Fig. 5 by the assumption that 'freedom of study' and in previous excerpts, the idea that if students are 'free to choose what they learn, how they learn, with whom they learn etc.' is a way to 'get the self back', as Nietzsche makes us consider, this is neither a counter-argument to competition in schools nor an argument supporting the notion that students who are 'free to….' are 'satisfied'/ 'happy'/ are able to 'regain the self'. We are left with a number of unanswered questions, such as, what does it mean to be free? Who defines this freedom? Freedom for whom? With whom? By whom? How does freedom come-into-being?

The omnipresence of 'democracy/the democratic' in the speakers' utterances in excerpt 4 means that 'democracy/the democratic' can be critiqued from within thus meaning that 'democracy/the democratic' can be simultaneously understood as authoritative and internally persuasive discourse (Bakhtin, 1975, 2012). In this sense, democracy may function as a hegemonial concept whilst simultaneously marking the invocation of the subject by the discourse and a subjectivising inversion. Excerpt 4, along with Figs. 1 to 4 raises a number of potentially worrying perversions of the signs 'democracy/the democratic', as potentially generalised 'cover-ups' of mental health issues with simplistic 'solutions' on how to deal with such issues.

Discussion: discourse, heteroglossia and 'democratic' struggles

The 4 excerpts analysed in this article were selected for their representatively of the shared doxa about democratic education at the conference under review. They show potentially alarming trends in how 'democracy' is discussed in dialogues, generally within the specific context of a conference on democratic education. The following aspects were examined: discourses on democracy used to hide speaker sentiments, democracy and words such as freedom used as interchangeable and convenient synonyms, and, democracy as pathos. Bakhtin's work served as a backbone to analyse these important phenomena.

As Mouffe (2000, 2009) shows, 'democratic values' are inherently antagonistic and discourse in particular plays an important role in antagonistic social relations (ibid). Bakhtin's concept of dialogism—and to be more specific, heteroglossia—offers a way to trace the discourses of the other-within-the-self (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984)—how one's other[s] are socially and discursively interwoven within one's speech. Bakhtin reminds us that,

> 'The utterance is filled with dialogic overtones, and they must be taken into account in order to fully understand the style of the utterance. After all, our thought itself—philosophical, scientific, artistic—is born and shaped in the process of interaction and struggle with others' thought, and this cannot but be reflected in the forms that verbally express our thought as well' (Bakhtin, 1986, p 92).

In this sense, it is important to acknowledge the 'democratic others' within 'democracy/the democratic'—due to its instability and function as a floating signifier (Hall, 1993). 'Democracy/the democratic' can function as authoritative discourse, and be simultaneously critiqued and reaccentuated as internally persuasive discourse. Discourses on 'democracy' in 'democratic schools' are simultaneously authoritative and internally persuasive due to dialogism generally, and heteroglossia, specifically. Heteroglossia allows one to deconstruct and reconstruct one's own utterances (Bakhtin, 1981).

Democracy, as we have shown in the excerpts, can function as authoritative discourse when distanced, generalised, stereotyped and tabooed. When democracy is 'assumed' it engenders mutually coexisting yet contradictory discourses which open up the possibility of critique and [re]accentuation—meaning that discourses can be simultaneously authoritative and internally persuasive.

The chosen excerpts have hinted at attempts to totalise and generalise 'democracy/the democratic' within discourses on 'democratic schools', whereby discourses on 'democratic schools' can contribute to cultural othering and stereotyping, as well as, simplistic assumptions about how 'democracy' functions and comes-into-being. In many instances discussed throughout this paper, speakers on democracy have 'described' notions of 'freedom'—it is important to note that freedom and democracy are not the same thing—many speakers in this paper describe 'freedom', but democracy requires antagonisms and instability (Rancière, 2007), a contingency of force and power (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001)—meaning that 'democracy' cannot be simply reduced to another sign or concept (such as freedom).

Many proponents of 'democratic education' seemingly focus on 'freedom' rather than 'democracy'. As such, many advocates of 'democratic education' and 'democratic schools' seemingly fail to acknowledge the social and discursive struggles which are characteristic of how democracy comes-into-being. These include pluralistic antagonisms (Mouffe, 2009) (including discourses), therefore, the word 'democracy' cannot be simply replaced by the word 'freedom' nor can it be explicitly 'explained' through notions of 'freedom'.

This paper has also hinted at some of the 'deeper' issues of 'democratic education' and 'democratic schools'. 'Democracy' in the context of 'democratic schools' is often uttered as an objective and/or totalised 'end', or 'assumed' as being 'present', which in turn means, that 'democracy' is seemingly never internally critiqued or reflected upon. We argue, this is a potentially dangerous precedent whereby 'democratic values' are uttered to justify certain educational and/or social arguments rather, than, problematising what 'democratic values' mean and their relevancies for/in society. There is thus a need to shift towards democracy as something to be problematised rather than a mere simplistic answer. Bakhtinian dialogism represents a powerful tool to counter-attack such problematic and ethically questionable uses of the word in education and to make it less distanced.

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Notes

1 Note that all excerpts within the chapter are verbatim, without any attempt to correct them.

2 'Unlike externally authoritative discourse, internally persuasive discourse whilst in the process of its affirmative assimilation is tightly intertwined with 'one's own word' (our translation).

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Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this paper as no datasets were generated or analysed in this study.

Additional information

Competing interests: The authors declare no competing financial interests.

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